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Student: **Michael Higley-Vance**

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EL7004-8

Dr. Alexandru Spatariu

The Online Learner

Activity #7: Interview Questions

Comments:

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These are all good questions for a candidate to online teaching. You can also ask particular questions about pedagogy online and their knowledge of technological tools.

Alex Spatariu 7 content 3 writing 3/24/2014

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Developing and Discussing Interview Questions

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Developing and Discussing Interview Questions

Online teaching and learning is rapidly changing the face of education through the way students receive and process new information and gain knowledge (Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009; Abdous, 2011). Teaching in an online learning environment requires a skill set most traditional teachers do not currently poses (Vesisenaho et al., 2010). Potential online administrators, interviewing online instructors, should consider highly qualified educators who demonstrate a thorough understanding of online teaching and learning, philosophy, and the instructional strategies necessary to motivate and successfully teach within the virtual learning environment (Berge, 2008). Therefore, it is important that the educational institution use an agreed upon and appropriate interview process to online learning, which will assess the skills, strategies, and teaching philosophies of potential candidates. Berg (2008) and Abdoul (2011) talk about key roles an instructor must be able to fulfill before successfully teaching online, such as the: social role, technical role, managerial role, and pedagogical role.

Interview Questions for Online Instructors

Before getting started with any interview the interviewer or committee should inform the candidate about the number of questions that will be asked, the time frame in which to answer the questions; and if possible provide them with a copy of the questions to look over as they are answering the questions asked (Davis & Herrera, 2013). It is also important to anticipate potential answers and develop follow-up questions, which might help in the selection process. Below are sample questions, what the committee should listen for in a candidate's response, as well as the rationale for why the question was selected.

Question One: *Please tell us about your professional background and why you are interested in this position.*

Answer Characteristics. The candidate should give concise information regarding degrees and qualifications suitable for the job, professional interests, motivation, and passion for the position and the teaching and learning process (Adams, 2013). The committee should listen for an interest in connecting with students online through different modes of technology as well as flexibility with instructional methods and learning strategies.

Rationale. This question gives the candidate the opportunity to become comfortable with the interview process and begin to formulate the foundation from which all other answers will derive (Davis & Herrera, 2013). The candidate must provide a detailed answer explaining why they are interested in working in an online setting. The second part of this question should include information regarding the implementation of technology, new teaching methodologies, and learning strategies because it shows evidence of the candidate's knowledge and applicable experience with these components of online learning (Johnson & Guetal, 2013).

Question Two: *What is your online teaching philosophy?*

Answer Characteristics. Listen for an overall theme that all students can learn and should have the opportunity to learn through technology. Listen for differentiation strategies addressing individual student needs and that particular schools or methods of delivery may not be appropriate for certain students or learning styles (Vesisenaho et al., 2010). Listen for a passion for teaching and learning, forming positive interactions and relationships with students and peers, and a willingness to try new approaches to teaching. Online learning should be a positive experience where students take control of their own learning and instructors are the facilitators for learning (Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009; Vesisenaho et al., 2010).

Rationale. It is important that relationships formation occur with the online learner and the online instructor as soon as possible. Online instructors must encourage and develop virtual learning environments where there are shared learning experiences (Berge, 2008; Lawson, 2010). Making these connections early encourages participation, instills motivation within learners, and encourages communication between the instructor and learner (Lawson, 2010; Vesisenaho et al., 2010).

Question Three: *What is your teaching experience in regards to the use of computers and technology within a virtual learning environment?*

Answer Characteristics. The committee should listen for a high level of technical experience involving multiple applications, word processing software, Web 2.0 tools, and general concepts of connectivity and bandwidth (Abdous, 2011; Johnson & Guetal, 2013). The candidate should talk about creating opportunities for students to experience within the online learning environment, using the tools and resources provided. It is important that the candidate speak about the significance of continued professional development and the importance of continued learning. Potential candidates must be able to help online students feel comfortable to navigate the learning environment or direct them to the appropriate technical and online supports (Lawson, 2010; Vesisenaho et al., 2010, Abdous, 2011).

Rationale. This question was selected because of the importance of a candidate's technical experience as an online instructor to ensure students are successful learning in a virtual space and using the appropriate technology tools and online resources. The technologies incorporated within the online learning environment is meant to maximize and increase the effectiveness of the educational process; making education accessible to more people (Abdous, 2011; Johnson & Guetal, 2013).

Question Four: *How would you create a positive student centered learning environment in your virtual classroom?*

Answer Characteristics. The committee should expect the candidate to talk about establishing clear expectations for learning and completing student work. The candidate should also speak about the importance of student interactions and interactivities, which support collaborative discussions and group performance outcomes (Berge, 2008; Vesisenaho et al., 2010). The candidate should include the importance of being flexible and a need to differentiate a student's learning based on individual student needs.

Rationale. This question needs to be asked because it allows the candidate to do some self-evaluation and thinking about how they plan to keep a positive and encouraging tone that is students centered while supporting the importance of teaching and learning (Adams, 2013; Davis & Herrera, 2013; Johnson & Guetal, 2013). Flexibility is important for an online instructor because online learning involves many different self-motivational characteristics and learning variables that cannot always be controlled by the learner or instructor (Lawson, 2010; Vesisenaho et al., 2010). In order for learning to happen successfully, instructor flexibility and a positive student centered learning environment is key (Berge, 2008; Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009; Vesisenaho et al., 2010; Abdous, 2011).

Question Five: *How will you communicate your expectations with your learners? What is your response time in returning communications with a student? What is your response time in returning graded assignments?*

Answer Characteristics. The committee should listen for organization of a syllabus, which is aligned with appropriate learning objectives and student performance outcomes. The response time should align with the institution's expectations or a reasonable justification for an

answer not currently supported (Johnson & Guetal, 2013). Response answers regarding assignment timelines should follow the institutions guidelines when possible or be reasonably justifiable.

Rationale. Organization of student responsibilities, learning expectations, and student performance outcomes are necessary to ensure the institution and instructor's course expectations are clearly communicated to all students (Axelson, 2007; Berge, 2008; Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009; Vesisenaho et al., 2010). It is important that the learner have a clear understanding of any time commitments and learning expectations before the online learning experience begins (Berg, 2008). Axelson (2007) reported that the main suggestion from online learners was a need and desire to connect with their advisors, tech support, and mentors on a consistent and regular basis. Such online supports include: writing centers, 24 -hour environment support, online tutorials, time management resources, and an online library. Lawson (2010) stated that, "In order to keep the online learning momentum moving forward, higher education institutions must ensure high levels of both learner satisfaction and quality instruction" (p. 3). This begins with organization from the instructor to ensure clearly developed and communicated course expectations, with appropriate links and resources, along with a well-communicated syllabus of student performance expectations.

Conclusion

Online learning is not for everyone as online teaching is not for every instructor (Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009; Vesisenaho et al., 2010). The selection of appropriate online instructor candidates is a critical one for any learning institution (Sadykova & Dautermann, 2009; Johnson & Guetal, 2013). Preparing for and interviewing potential online instructors is challenging, but with research and thoughtful consideration to the questions being asked, this

process can provide an interview committee the answers which will help select the best prepared candidate.

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